

In the claims:

1. (currently amended) A method for use in an access point in a wireless communications environment including multiple access points and stations, wherein stations gain network access by associating with one or more of the access points, comprising:

at each of a plurality of access points within communication range of stations, repeatedly executing the steps of:

collecting bid messages from stations not currently associated with that access point, each bid message indicative of a request to associate, and including a parameter related to the distance between the access point and the station;

selecting ~~at least one~~ only a subset of the bid messages based at least in part on the parameter related to distance; and

sending an accept message to ~~the~~ each station from which a ~~the~~ selected bid message was received, the accept message for causing the station to associate with the access point.

2. (original) The method of claim 1 wherein the step of sending an accept message sends an accept message to the station whose bid message included the parameter indicating the closest distance.

3. (original) The method of claim 2 wherein the accept message is sent only if a maximum number of station associations has not been exceeded.

4. (original) The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of maintaining a table including an entry for each station from which a bid message has been received, each entry including the parameter.

5. (currently amended) A method for use in an access point in a wireless communications environment including multiple access points and stations, wherein stations gain network access by associating with one or more of the access points, comprising:  
at each of a plurality of the access points within communication range of the stations, repeatedly executing the steps of:

collecting bid messages from stations not currently associated with that access point, each bid message indicative of a request to associate, and including a parameter related to the distance between the access point and the station;

maintaining a table including an entry for each station from which a bid message has been received, each entry including the parameter;

selecting only a subset of the bid messages ~~at least one bid~~ based at least in part on the parameters in the table; and

sending an accept message to ~~the~~ each station which submitted ~~the~~ a selected bid, the accept message for causing the station to associate with the access point.

6. (previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein said selecting step further includes employing the parameter to select at least one of the bid messages based at least in part on an indication of data rate provided to the station by the access point with which the station is currently associated.

7. (previously presented) A method for use in an access point in a wireless communications environment including multiple access points and stations, wherein stations gain network access by associating with one or more of the access points, comprising:

periodically, at each of a plurality of access points within communication range of stations:

collecting bid messages from stations not currently associated with that access point, each bid message indicative of a request to associate;

selecting the bid from the station having the lowest data rate; and

sending an accept message to the station which submitted the selected bid, the accept message indicating that the station is permitted to associate with the access point.